

At
Life's
Windows



Alexander Louis Fraser

Cousin Bessie

With love and
best-wishes from
Ida.

Christmas - 1910.

At Life's Windows

AT LIFE'S WINDOWS

BY

ALEXANDER LOUIS FRASER

Author of "*Sonnets and Other Verses.*"

*"Poetry purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity
which obscures from us the wonder of our being."*

SHELLEY: *A Defence of Poetry.*

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TO THE MEMBERS
PAST AND PRESENT
OF THE
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NOVA SCOTIA



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FOREWORD

During the past twelve months the following poems, with a few exceptions, appeared in the leading Canadian magazines and journals. The kind words received from appreciative readers at the time encourage the author to offer them in this form. Many of them have been rewritten.

A. L. F.

THE MANSE,
Great Village,
Nova Scotia.

Thanksgiving, 1910.

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SONNETS

THE ARBITER.

“Fit audience let me find, though few”— I read
In one who sang his song because he must;
Now all those listless ears are filled with dust,
And all that brood of Jealousy is dead.
All honour to the heedful few who said:
‘Sing on: undaunted be, for you may trust
That time’s wise jury to you will be just.’
And now that noble brow is garlanded.

So blinded Prejudice shall pass away;
And Time shall clear his court of all the throng
That fills the air as with a Babel voice;
Then, as some lyre, which long forgotten lay,
And on whose strings there slept Orphean song,
Thrills to the touch, so Beauty shall rejoice.

EMPTY NESTS.

Behold that nest: by Summer's hand 'twas swung,
Beneath a scalloped canopy of green
Which Autumn has removed: therein were seen
Four, tiny, feeble forms of feathery young —
'Tis empty now: they sing far fields among,
Where smiting winds ne'er blow from frozen seas,
Nor wan-faced Hunger sits 'neath leafless trees;
But where sweet scents are to the zephyrs flung.

How like this one, beneath the old roof-tree,
Where little voices piped as day was born,
And Love helped them their early powers to essay;
They felt the world's strange lure and went away;
So in grey days now you can sometimes see
Mem'ry and Solitude sit here — forlorn!

THE ABANDONED HILLS.

Like piteous outcasts robed Respect doth slight,
As she unto her well-lit home repairs,
Unmindful that beneath the dome of Night
Are luckless ones for whom no guardian cares;
Or like to those on whom fell Plunder preyed,
So that to them remained nor robes nor gold —
Who lie upon the wayside sore dismayed,
With bleeding brows, sad objects to behold;

Are those abandoned hills: impoverished, bare,
Whose mute appeal is lost on later days —
Yet Nature's playful children nestled there
And Dawn and Dusk alike heard songs of praise,
In artless years, ere low-browed Mammon came,
Who left them thus — mere spectacles of shame!

JULIUS.

Posterity thy kindness shall commend
For what took place at Sidon long ago,
When Paul, thy ward in chains, would Romewards go
Since Pride with haughty mien would fain attend,
Yea counsel them whose task is to defend
The commonwealth with baton or in gown;
At whose appeal some lay the olive down,
And unto arrogance their influence lend.

Far otherwise with thee; for thou had'st learned
To harbor gentleness within thy breast;
And for thy simple courtesy hast earned
Our lasting praise,— a name to be caressed:
Brother of those, nowise from pity turned
Even though they be in gilded livery dressed.

ONESIPHORUS.

“Timotheus, when here and there you go
Through Ephesus upon your pastoral round,
Where every street to me is hallowed ground,
I will be bold and ask you to bestow
Kindness upon one home where long ago
A helpmate lived, whose like is seldom found,
And when the sweet spring flowers begin to blow,
Sometimes for me lay one upon his mound.”

Thus Paul long since from out his Roman cell,
As from the past he saw a face arise —
Fit picture of the veteran who surveys
His yester-years, waiting for evening bell,
While Hesper shines within his quiet skies,
And Mem’ry fills with cheer his lonely days!

HALLEY'S COMET.

Far-travelled one! where are those wistful eyes
That long ago looked out before the dawn
To hail thine advent in the orient skies?—
They watch not for thee now, for they are gone
And, weary-grown with years, have fallen asleep—
Save for those few, much dimmed, who still remain;
And ours shall close; others shall vigils keep
When thou shalt look upon the world again.

But ah, these human lives transcend thee far:
These minds of ours can trace thy trackless way;
And when nor sun, nor moon, nor brightest star
Shall longer shine,— through an eternal day
In some far sphere we'll touch that powerful Hand
That now thy spacious movements doth command!

EDWARD VII.

If smiles of June reach cross December snows,
And robins' vespers linger in the ear
When Boreas his bugle rudely blows
And summer's rich-robed choir is far from here;
If one sweet face in Mem'ry's portrait lives,
And proves a blessing till life's latest day;
If but a word or look such comfort gives
As cheers one far upon a weary way —

Then thou who didst defend the weal of all,
Beseeching sundered peoples brothers be,
Wilt be remembered long: whate'er befall,
Time shall not dim thy gracious memory:
God's talisman, allaying human fears,
Posterity shall name thy name with tears!

NIGHT.

With jewelled diadem, and richly dressed
In robes that were by Twilight's fingers wrought,
Hasten, sweet Night, from out the misty west,
For word of thine approach the eve-star brought.
Day lingered long, and now a plea for rest
By Earth's tired progeny is mutely made —
They fain would lie like children on thy breast,
And find repose within thine ample shade.

And since thine opiate, from Lethe borne,
Hath power to soothe Toil's weary retinue;
Since they who quaff its cup, o'er-worked and worn,
With energies regirt begin anew —
So when our day in Duty's service ends,
Thy brother, Death, shall prove the best of friends!

SUCCESS.

What is it to succeed? Is it to do
Some long-dreamt feat and like a shooting star
Have its attending glory blazoned far,
While men through eyes of wonder gaze at you?
Or is it with a passion to pursue
A mundane good, and to surround yourself
With luxuries, attendants, hoarded pelf —
Though to your conscience you may bid adieu?

Nor this nor that! But rather 'tis to be:
To feel that in the self success must lie;
'Tis in the strife 'tween soul and sense to see
The higher win, while lusts and passions die —
Who thus, 'mong men, the air of victory breathes,
A heavenly hand his brow with amaranth wreathes!

TO MARK TWAIN.

Sometimes behind the cleft, cloud-curtains we
The constant sun a moment can descry,
And later, to the joy of Hope, will see
A gleam fall o'er the grave where day doth lie;
And all the while a bird, though tempest roared
And noontide looked like to approaching night,
Within a bower its song, undaunted, poured,
As if to say: "Cheer up! and bide the light."

Such didst thou seem: thy smile found every rift
To the world's tears, and gladdened hours of grief;
Thy reassuring voice — Dame Nature's gift —
Brought to a care-worn age a sweet relief:
Rest, honoured head! thine afterglow shall be
A help when human fields grow shadowy.

A DUMB VOICE.

The evening bell sets human toilers free,
And Care soon leaves the weary father's mind
When tiny arms about him are entwined;
For Love can soothe the ache of Drudgery.
I'm but a livery horse, and ne'er for me,
Or day or night, comes what we covet — rest;
But, soldier-like, bide Duty's stern behest
To post afar, and uncomplainingly.

I envy those who have their usual round;
Or plough the pastures where they played in youth;
Or toil till stars appear unto the sound
Of well-known voices — masters — men of ruth —
Vain wish! — But, sons of men, may thought be given
To all who wear our badge, and oft o'er driven!

POESY.

Though Time disturbs all human reckoning
And theory discards like outgrown clothes;
Though deep-eyed Knowledge, looking for repose,
Unto no resting place for long may cling —
For into well-searched skies new stars may swing
And patient Science wonders yet disclose,
Or robed Philosophy tell what she knows —
Whilst thou wilt stand in silence, wondering!

Yet, Poesy, thou dost not pass away:
Who calls the bard of Chios out of date?
Thou servest not, as some, a passing day,
Nor Now nor Then alone, nor Here nor There;
And though few love thee, this should compensate,
Thou speakest for all time — for everywhere!

ROBERT BROWNING.

“Compel him strive, which means, in man, as good as reach the goal.”—THE POPE.

Thy face is radiant as when lustrous morn
Comes on the lingering heels of sable night;
And like some prophet robed in love and might
Thou thrilllest those enthralled to Fear — forlorn —
“Look up: day dawns: Despair is devil-born;
The throne of this old world is filled by Right” —
Great words to those who falter in the fight;
Discomfiture unto brow-beating Scorn!

Did we believe, with thee, that failure lies
In naught external to the human soul;
That garlands wait the brow of him who dies
Deeply intent upon a distant goal —
Through hope-lit eyes we'd scan the human field,
And to benumbing Doubt would never yield!

MEMORY.

Amid those haunts where in life's morn we played —
Forsaken downs where still the daisies blow;
Beside those banks where babbling brooklets go;
Past the fern fronds which yearly line the glade,
With measured step ofttimes there moves a maid
Of pensive mien who leisurely doth trace
Each human foot-print Time would fain efface,—
For well she knows the ruin of his spade!

But yester-eve when loitering all alone
In that still place where earthly journeys end
I saw her dig the moss from off a stone.
“I oft come here,” she said, “a while to spend;
Nothing should die — no flower that ever blew
In life's dear garden plot for love and you!”

MARCH.

The Year's third-born! a child whose voice is shrill,
Whose elfish ways do sober Patience try,
Or smiling bland or making faces wry —
Elate so thou each day with frolic fill,
Art thou from Winter fled, and o'er the hill
Or down the dale dost merry mischief make,—
Some madcap fellow that can ne'er be still,
Before whose freaks Timidity doth quake?

Though Youth's fleet foot thou easily canst tire;
Or Age impede whose measured step is slow;
Though maidens meet thee with a veiled face;
Be this thy praise: thou kindlest Nature's fire
Where late the snow lay deep, and in its place
Thou plantest plots where pale primroses blow!

NAOMI.

In tears she closed her much-loved cottage door,
Then turned her face unto a stranger-land,
For Drought drank Judah's streams down to the sand,
And Famine stalked around! The wrench she bore
With a brave woman's heart, for she had store
In those she loved; and though the tears did burn,
This thought was salve unto her anguish sore —
Would not they all with some new spring return?

She went out full, but hear her plaint, heart-wrung,
As back she comes bereft; for all she had
Lay low and mute beneath far Moab's sod —
In this akin to pilgrims who among
Dark, distant hills dig graves; then lone and sad
Return, and leave them in the care of God!

OPPORTUNITY.

What life-like pictures Time has framed in thee,
Limned by some nameless son of ancient Rome —
Mayhap a sailor-poet nearing home:
Behind him lay the deep and boundless sea,
Emblem of life with all its mystery,
By Tempest's cruel lash oft whipt to foam;
Before, the bay; stars in the skyey dome;
And tides to bear him to his destiny.

So here and there as o'er life's sea we pass
Sure anchorage we spy in quiet bays;
But on Time's course we onward move — alas,
It, like the ocean's own, brooks no delays;
But they who traffic well in human seas,
Will land at last — full-freighted argosies!

SPRING SUNSHINE.

Emancipator, hail! a friend benign
Art thou, who Winter, long entrenched, to flight
Hast driven, and to the open dost invite
All those who felt his thrall: bidding recline
On green-clad knolls many in life's decline;
While by the hand thou leadest children bright
To spend glad hours in sheltered vales bedight
By Flora gay. Yea, visitor divine,
Thrice welcome here! For where dull years are spent
In solitude, thou robed in vestments pure,
With smiles wilt come, and with fair fingers gild
Hope's mottoes on the wall, and bid men 'dure
What the All-wise for them has kindly willed —
Then thou dost prove a very sacrament!

SHADOWED.

What though thou hurry far and change thy name,
And seek to start anew 'neath foreign skies,
And overlay thy past with heaps of lies?—
Remember that this world is not the same
As it was once: 'tis smaller far, and blame
Is tracked by Justice with her eagle eyes —
Her retinue will take thee by surprise,
And thou be heralded a man of shame!

But if the arm of Law thou should'st evade,
From thy base self, ah, whither canst thou flee?
For o'er thy well-walled way shall fall the shade
Of Guilt to fill thy soul with misery;
And on thy shoulder shall Death's hand be laid,
When lo, at last, all masks shall fall from thee!

SACRED PLACES.

What monuments mark all this world of ours!
Childhood's sweet home to which in tears we turn;
That bench where we Truth's alphabet did learn;
Each dear play-place 'neath Youth's long-faded
bowers;
A church — plain, quaint, and vaunting no high
towers;
Those sacred mounds where we in silence bend;
Where first we met — or last we saw — a friend;
Love-guarded doors by which the rarest flowers
Have bloomed and died. Ah! in this stretch of years
There's not a place but calls forth some one's tears:
No field or lane or path in all the wold;
No pond or lingering stream, or sloping hill;
No home or church or graveyard lone and still
But for some one has interests manifold!

THE PRODIGAL.

Too long, alas, on the World's husks I've fed —
Fare that has now to choking ashes turned,
Till by Respect I find that I am spurned,
And erstwhile friends afar from me have fled;
But there comes back a story that was read,
When priceless truth at one dear knee I learned,
Of that fond father who so deeply yearned
For his lost son who was as good as dead —

How, serf to Want, beside the swine-trough seated,
Through Folly's mist he saw fields where he played —
A home where Plenty did her bounty show;
And though unkempt he was with kindness greeted
By Love who at Hope's window long had stayed:
And that was God, she said! — I'll homeward go!

TO PINE HILL COLLEGE.

As one whom Memory leads sometimes will turn
Into a silent lane to childhood dear,
Where 'mong the trees his home its roof doth rear —
Where motherhood above his cot did yearn;
Or bent, brown heads at one fond knee did learn
Their prayers to lisp,— will feel upon his brow
Once more his mother's parting kiss and vow
For her dear sake a worthy name to earn.

So thy far-sundered sons remember thee,
And oft from latitudes or warm or cold
Will homeward hie to hear thy voice again.
Mother benign! we love thee as of old,
Thy toil for us can ne'er forgotten be —
Thy very name fills us with pleasant pain!

THE POET.

The crowds pass on: with them he does not go,
But tarries to console a sobbing child;
Or treadeth softly where the violets blow
In some retreat; or is an hour beguiled
By Spring's first warbler; or he loves to gaze
At lambent lightning or at storm-swept skies;
Or to the Soul of things devotion pays;
Or with the World's birth-throes doth sympathize.

Each sound and sight is in his service pressed,
And lives in after years when mothers sing,
Within the twilight's haze, their babes to rest;
Or sacred temples with hosannas ring;
Or when dumb hearts find pain or joy expressed
In words beyond their own imagining.

NEGLECT.

Like one who haps upon a stripèd thing,
Of tiger born, within the tangled wood,
And brings it home and daily toothsome food,
As 'twere his child, he unto it doth bring,—
Yea fondles it so it to him will cling
Beseechingly — till lo, full-grown, its eyes
Flash fire; he falls beneath its stroke and dies —
Lest some one rush unto his rescuing!

Are they in Youth's green glade who sometimes spare
Strange elfish things that dart across their way;
For when they gain life's slopes, oft brown and bare
Forms fierce and rude will fill them with dismay —
Would sober Age from this surprise be free?
All lurking lusts should now destroyèd be.

THE POND.

Here sleeps the pond to youthful mem'ries dear,
Whereinto flow the old, green-bordered rills,
Which had their birth among those changeless hills!
In yonder shore-curve when the Spring came here
She heard the frogs at vespers; and where rear
Those gnarlèd remnants of the dureful pine
Their heads,— the anglers' rests within the weir —
On happy, care-free days I threw my line.

And when old Winter with his magic might
A crystal covering o'er the expanse drew,
Light-hearted Youth oft on a starry night
From shore to shore in fancy circles flew:
Dear pond! I know thine every nook and cove,
And here, to find lost Childhood, often rove!

THE BELATED BIRD.

Thou tiny victim of the stealthy frost,
Why didst thou linger in this cruel clime,
When Nature told thee that the leaving time
Had come? Thy fellows called to thee and crossed
To fairer fields,— unheeding, thou wast lost:
“Why hurry now? Why show anxiety?
Soft blows the wind; no fields could greener be”—
Thou didst delay, but O! at what a cost!

Thou foolish, feathered one — unfortunate!
Art not unlike the man around whose head
The withered autumn leaves are falling fast;
Who recks not that the time is waxing late;
But finds, ere long, a frost o'er all things spread,
And that, alas, his day of grace is past!

OTHER VERSES

LIFE.

Amid the gloom of midnight
Merely a phantom-spark —
At most a span of daylight
Betwixt the dark and dark?

Or a bubble that rose and floated,
Then merged into the sea,
With nothing that denoted
Its continuity?

Ah! think not so; 'tis vaster —
Even day that never dies;
Or a seaward sail whose master
Seeks port 'neath sunny skies.

MAY.

Hail! favourite daughter of the Year,
More constant than thy sister gone,
Who smiled and wept at Winter's bier,
Glad children greet thee on the lawn.

In hectic red, or priestly white,
Or grey, or brown, some months are seen;
But what could be a bonnier sight
Than thou,— arrayed in kirtle green?

Thy welcome voice is soft and sweet;
And, gentle-mannered, winsome maid,
With song the toiler thou wilt greet
In furrowed field, or glen, or glade.

Thy beauteous brow with blooms is decked,
For Flora on thee doth attend;
And faded fields with flowers are flecked
Where'er thy fairy footsteps tend.

A renovation everywhere,
Wrought by thy fingers we espay,
As when a child with loving care
Her father's home will beautify.

Smiling thou sayest: "I leave thee soon —
My days just number thirty-one;
But you shall see my sister June
Complete the task by me begun."



CHILDHOOD'S APPEAL.

We meet it in those thin-clad ones who view with
wistful eyes
Our shops' well-lighted windows when the stars are
in the skies;
Then, all unsought, return to homes where Want
thinks sullenly
Of Comfort with her dangling purse and well-robbed
Luxury.

We see it in those outstretched hands that feel as
feels the vine
When it is reaching for support round which it fain
would twine;
And foster-parent Charity, though good and kind
thou art,
There is a cry for mother-love in every orphan's heart.

We hear it in the voices of the little ones who play
In over-crowded, dusty streets, where shines the
summer day —

While far beyond the city's din, in God's big out-of-
doors
The progeny of Plenty are playing by the shores.

'Tis in the sound of tottering feet that just begin to
walk;
'Tis on the lips of little ones who try so hard to talk;
'Tis in the touch that pulls aside the veil of Mystery;
'Tis in the thought that far too soon in Custom's
thrall they'll be!



ON RECEIVING THE PICTURE OF AN OLD CHURCH.

No marvel that in ancient Jewish days
When Temple walls arose anew,
And the long silence yielded place to praise,
Tears should men's cheeks bedew.

For to a generation that was grey
That site had mem'ries manifold;
And though there dawned for them a brighter
day,
Who could forget the old?

And as I look on thee a pang is felt —
First sanctuary that I knew;
For oft within thy silences I knelt,
And from thee succour drew!

Though later splendour may surpass thee far,
And all thy lowness reveal —
Still on life's stormy sea thou art a star
To many a sliding keel.

THEN.

League after league we onward go,
Beneath our burdens bending;
Some day a turn we'll gain when lo,
We'll see our journey's ending —
A heavenly city all aglow
To us its welcome sending.

Where Here from There is separate
Shall come this friendly greeting:
"They call me Death: I simply wait
All earthly pilgrims meeting"—
And then we'll pass in through the gate,
Our hearts with high hopes beating!

TO ROBERT BURNS.

When Nature took thee for her own,
What wondrous things to thee were shown,
As thou with her wast all alone
 By field and stream,
With birds that sing and winds that moan
 And lights that gleam.

With care she trained thine eye to see;
She tuned thy voice to melody;
And this she gave in large degree —
 That tenderness
By which each thing in misery
 Thou didst caress:

If but a mouse's nest was torn,
Or daisy of its beauty shorn,
Or bleat of lamb to thee was borne,
 Thy bosom heaved;
While thought that "man was made to mourn"
 Thee deeply grieved.

To Labor's guild thine heart was warm,
And thou would'st gladly lift thine arm
To shield a mortal man from harm —

His wrongs redress;
For thou didst till thine Ayrshire farm
In deep distress.

'Mong bards that on Parnassus stand
Thou sangest of thy native land;
In Duty's name thou didst command
To deeds sublime
In stirring songs that still withstand
The touch of Time.

For thee the simple life was best,
Since Wealth by Care might be distressed —
Yea, that man was supremely blest
Who, tired and spent,
Could lay his head on Love's soft breast
And be content.

Humanity found voice again
Proud Formalism to arraign,
And this true verdict to obtain:
 “Naught great as love,”
For it doth rank in God’s domain
 All else above.

Nature was pleased: a smile she wore,
Because upon the earth once more
Lived one who understood her lore —
 Yea, spake her word
As it two centuries before
 Was sweetly heard!



ADMIT HIM.

Outside your fast barred door He stands—
 His locks all wet with dew,
While knocking with those blessed hands
 That once were pierced for you.

He longs to give you every good,
 And with you aye abide;
And were He only understood,
 Your heart you'd open wide.

His coming unto you would bring
 All that is choicest — best;
Your heart-door, then, wide open fling
 And He will be your guest!

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Father in Heaven, who fillest Mercy's throne,
Unto Thy holy name may there be shown
The reverence that is due to Thee alone.

May Error's fortress fall unto the ground,
And may the brow of Right be duly crowned
By an applauding world standing around.

Unto Thy will may we become resigned,
And always look upon Thy claims as kind,
And in the ways of Heaven our pattern find.

While day by day our little lives are spent,
We ask, dear Lord, for needed nourishment,
And with Thy giving we would be content.

We plead for pardon now before Thy throne —
To all our foes we have forgiveness shown;
So to our need Thy wondrous grace make known.

And when in Duty's way we trials meet,
Or dangerous by-paths lure our wandering feet,
Be Thou our succour, O, we thee entreat!

For Thy dominion, Lord, all men shall see
Established in glorious majesty,
And it shall 'dure throughout eternity.

TO MORPHEUS.

As Day lets down the bars, she sees thee stand
At human haunts,— thy poppies in thy hand;
And, minister of Sleep, the kindly boon
Of easeful rest is thine: thereafter soon
Tired little ones in Fairy-meads will lie,
And sober age to Lethe's banks will hie;
Out in the fields of sleep what sights arise:—
On heads of shame Love's hand caressing lies;
Roses again upon the wan cheeks blow;
And from the eye of Care afar we go;
The exile's feet find paths that lead him home;
And with the dead, Elysian fields we roam;
Life's sombre sky with shining stars is bright —
And thus till Morn succeeds departing Night.

THE CHURCH'S CHALLENGE.

(Who will go for us?)—ISAIAH VI: 8.

When gaps are made in ranks where fearless soldiers
stood,

Lifting, 'mid iron hail, their faces to the foe,
Recruits step forth apace, full-mailed in hardihood,
And on to utmost danger with buoyancy they go.

Surely it cannot be that you'll be shamed by these,
For 'gainst tremendous odds Truth's servants,
too, have sped;

Surely you do not crave for luxury or ease—
The Nazarene had not whereon to lay His head!

Come, serve God and thy fellows, and give them of
thy best;

Come, bring a soldier's heart that knows how to
obey;

And be it near or far where thou shalt take thy rest,
Upon thy mound a wreath Posterity shall lay.

“ AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM.”

No room in Bethlehem — ah, ill portent
For Him who came the world to save:
Like one apart His sinless years were spent
From manger to the grave.

Dull Nazareth who knew the toil-worn man
Was blinded so it could not see
That He fulfilled since ancient time began
Truth's richest prophecy.

And though He came unto His own — to those
Who for that coming were prepared,
As one who falls among relentless foes,
Thus at their hands He fared.

But whensoe'er a humble home or heart
To Him a welcome did extend
To such He did a lasting good impart
For He became their friend.

And, patient Saviour, now for Thy dear sake
I would dismiss each darling sin;
And very humbly would beseech Thee make
One contrite heart Thine inn!

A COIN'S STORY.

Since from the mint I first was borne
 What things to me befell;
And how they left me old and worn
 Would take too long to tell:

Within a buttressed bank I lay
 Awhile 'neath lock and key;
Believe me 'twas a welcome day
 That told me I was free.

Soon to a portly publican
 For spirits I was paid;
As round the room rude laughter ran,
 My heart was sore dismayed.

For months upon the trampled ground,
 Forgotten, I had lain,
Till one spring morning I was found —
 The prize of April rain.

Into a poor man's purse I went,
 His hand was rough and red;
But that same evening I was spent
 To buy his children bread.

I oft have felt the miser's touch,
 Have seen his lustful eye —
His conduct unto me was such
 I felt that I might die!

I've had my times of ecstasy —
 Held in Toil's honest hand;
Or when Devotion offered me
 Where Duty's altars stand.

Alas! few know my real worth,
 A means unto an end;
To minister to man on earth,
 God's glory to extend!

THE FATE OF THE TRUTH.*

(“*Take heed, therefore, how ye bear.*”)—JESUS.

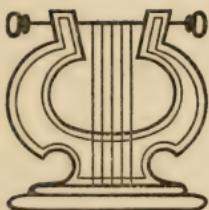
Lord, some there are who prove to be
Like that hard way where fell the grain;
The seed is caught up presently,
And all the toiler’s task is vain.

Alas! if we should leave this place,
And on our hearts truth leave no trace.

Like surface soil, some promise well,
But wither ’neath the world’s fierce glare;
So not a single blade will tell
That once a sower’s hand was there.
Alas! if thus our lives should prove,
And truth’s plant die for lack of love.

And some resemble most that plot
Where thorns dispute each inch of ground;
And ’tis the truth’s unhappy lot
That no perfection there is found.
Alas! if in our hearts some care
Should choke the good just springing there.

Lord, help us so to hear Thy voice
That truth may have fit time to root,
That we may make all heaven rejoice,
And duly yield the Spirit's fruit:
To this end give the listening ear
To rightly use what's spoken here!



*Being Hymn 182 in *Songs of Evangelism*, 1910.

THE SMILE OF GOD.

The smile of God,— the sunlight seemed
As o'er the counterpane it lay,
'Neath which a life ebbed fast away;
For on the gloom a glory gleamed.

Still there are those by whom 'tis deemed
Simply a sun-emitted ray —
Your smile of God!

But since that morn oftentimes I've dreamed
It fell across the child at play;
Or lit life's sky in evening grey;
Or in dim lanes 'twas this that beamed —
The smile of God!

SUNDOWN.

The Pilgrim of the sky has pitched his tent
Beneath the hills that slope to yonder west;
He could no farther fare, his light was spent,
And Darkness hard upon his pathway pressed.

On either side his track the fire-flakes fell,
As sparks that blow from off a passing train;
And on the skyey fields his course they'll tell,
Till, with relighted torch, he comes again.

THE SABBATH.

We welcome thee, thou sacred Sabbath day,
For thou to man a compliment dost pay;
Thy coming doth this constant witness give,
That not by “bread alone” we mortals live;
That ill we fare if on this world we spend
Our constant thought, and slovenly attend
Unto those weighty matters that concern
Our endless weal or woe: thou bidst us turn
Our minds to what comports with after bliss —
Sweet Sabbath day, we welcome thee for this.

What pleasing quiet falls at thy command:
The sounds of Industry on every hand
Are muffled now, and man and beast can take
Respite from Toil; naught does the stillness break
Save church bells echoing from hill to hill —
Sounds that a human heart with joy should fill.

Whilst thou art here some touching sights are seen:
Hoar, halting Age that on its staff doth lean;
Or bright-eyed Childhood with its heart so glad;
Or clouded brows which tell the grief they had;

Or Vanity with prim attire and gait;
Or plain Humility in low estate —
All pass the mounds in which their loved ones sleep,
Where Memory doth here tireless vigil keep:
Unto the house of God they make their way,
Where all those heavy sleepers used to pray;
Hence with rekindled hope full many a heart
With buoyancy will tread to-morrow's mart.

Alas! that some should so unkindly treat
That which their sires with orisons would greet
And from insult defend — they home remain
While thou dost call from chapel doors in vain.

But, Sabbath morn, we hail thee with delight,
And pray that when the shades of coming night
Tell us that thou once more from us art gone,
Thine hallowed influence may linger on —
That down into the dust and noise where we
Again must go, there thou with us mayest be
Like some remembered face — a light to show
Our wandering feet the way that they should go.

WAITING.

Love dwelt within a cottage fair
 Beside a sheltered bay;
And watched the ships weigh anchor there,
 Then turn their prows away.

And when within that quiet bay
 The sea-storm echoed loud,
Pleas for their loved ones far away
 Went up from hearts, care-bowed:

That He who ruled the raging deep
 Would quell the unquiet main;
That He their sea-tossed friends would keep
 And bring them back again.

* * * * *

There many, many years agone —
 So runs this simple tale,
A bark — *The Fundy* — one day's dawn
 Moved out with swelling sail.

And till her lord, departing, waned
Upon the far deck, dim,
Love on the tear-marked sand remained
And waved farewells to him.

Then Hope with Love kept company
And wiped her tears away,
And told her she would surely see
His sail return some day;
And at her feet with pleasure he
Would orient treasures lay.

* * * * *

Though Springs gave place to Autumns dun
And Winters followed drear,
By post or press news there was none
That care-filled heart to cheer —

Naught save the word Dame Rumour brought
How some one spied — forlorn —
A craft like his in tempest caught
Where seas split on Cape Horn!

So Love upon her pillow tossed
 Her head for many a night,
While sometimes of her dear one lost
 Fancy gave her a sight:—

She saw him tramp his misty deck,
 And face the slanting gale;
She saw his craft a tiny speck,
 Marked by a wind-torn sail;
She saw *The Fundy* all a wreck:
 It made her spirits quail.

She saw him cast away upon
 An island desolate,
With all communication gone,
 Where he must wait and wait —

Till Fortune bring some friendly sail
 O'er the horizon dim —
Some craft to hear his piteous wail
 And go to rescue him.

* * * * *

Meantime the seasons forward drew,
 While year by year did die;
His children up from childhood grew,
 While wind-filled sails went by
Within that bay, which she would view
 With pain and tear-dimmed eye.

Hope left him to his oozy fate —
 “He will no more return!”
And so the room grew dark, where late
 A light for him did burn.

But Love sat oft beside that bay;
 And on the ebbing tide
A bunch of sweet, spring flowers would lay,
 And watch them ride and ride;
Then bid them float far, far away
 To where her loved one died,
And weep: “Alas! no dawning day
 Will bring him to my side!”

THE ORPHAN'S LAMENT.

*“ But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me !”*

— WORDSWORTH.

Though many Winters' snow
Have been thy winding-sheet,
Affection's flowers still blow
And shed their odors sweet
Above, around
This sacred mound
In which, that dismal day,
They laid thy form away;
And somehow still it gives relief
In Mem'ry's listening ear to tell our sorest grief.

To-day, when rain is falling
As sadly it fell then,
We are that day recalling —
Time brings it back again,
When like a brood
Of birds in wood
Which 'neath Love's wings would hide
And all storms bravely bide,

Till by some sportsman's aim bereft
Were we, till Death's dart flew, and orphan-
hearts were left.

Grey woods shall yet be greening
Where far-flown flocks shall meet,
And on the braes the yeanling
Shall by its mother bleat;
But days of yore
Return no more,
When we were free from fear
Because we had thee near;
But this doth ease our poignant pain —
Eternity's glad Spring shall give thee back again!



